

THE BLESSEDNESS OF THE DEAD WHO DIE IN
THE LORD,

4986. g. 2
116.

ILLUSTRATED IN A

S E R M O N,

PREACHED AT THE FUNERAL OF THE

Rev. Nathan Strong,

SENIOR PASTOR OF THE SECOND CHURCH OF
CHRIST IN

C O V E N T R Y,

WHO DIED NOVEMBER 7th, 1795,

IN THE 79th YEAR OF HIS AGE.

By NATHAN WILLIAMS, D. D.

Pastor of the Church in Tolland.

H A R T F O R D:

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1796.



dress before I went into prison to witness it
and to give my last charge to my wife and chil-

dren. ——


—
view our dear Solemn assembly and confess that
we are now in a state of spiritual darkness and
are laboring under the curse of sin. —
MS. B. 1. 1. v. 10. l. 10.
A Funeral Sermon.
held with solemnity in the church of our Saviour and
filled up with abundant

of his grace. —
the day of his birth and his resurrection. —
REVELATION XIV. 13. —
And I heard a voice from Heaven, saying unto me,

write, blessed are the dead which die in the
Lord, from henceforth : yea, saith the Spirit,
that they may rest from their labours and their
works, do follow them.

THESE words teach us that labors and sufferings are allotted to good men in this life—and designed as means to prepare them for a state of glory in the world to come. That the solemn event of death is needful to break down that separating wall, which excludes the faithful servants of God, from that compleat felicity which is provided for them in the heavenly world. And however undesirable in itself, yet, the consequences will be very happy. They die, that they may rest from their labors, and reap the happy fruits of their faithful services. Their works shall not go before them as the purchase and price of the heavenly inheritance ; but shall follow them as the evidence of their having lived and died in the Lord. Good men shall not be rewarded for their works, but according to them. Their good deeds shall be the rule and

measure of the reward ; but the real ground and cause of it, is the righteousness of Christ. Without this, neither our persons nor services can be accepted with God.

But since the consequences of death are very interesting to us, let us enquire into the character of those who are here declared, in this solemn manner, to be blessed in their death ? And then, what are some of those things, in which this blessedness does consist ?

I. What is the character of those who are blessed in their death ? *Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord*, said the voice from Heaven.— This mode of expression is often used in the bible, but not always to convey the same meaning.— Here and in many other passages, it refers to that special relation, which true christians bear to Christ Jesus. They are united to him as the branches to the vine, he is pleased to admit them into a very near and dear connection with himself ; and to account them one with him, so as to entitle them to those saving blessings, which he, as mediator, has purchased, and has right to communicate. This is more than to be in Christ, as members of his mystical body, the militant church. Men may bear a visible covenant relation to Christ : and yet not have his spirit wrought in their hearts : yea, *they may be enemies to him in their minds by wicked works.*

The Gospel often speaks of a near and intimate union between Christ and his spiritual seed. He is in them by the gracious influences of the Holy Spirit, by which the same mind, the same spirit and disposition is wrought in them, which is in him. Thus they are said to be partakers of Christ. They have the same holy and heavenly mind, which was in him in a very eminent degree, yea, without measure. This is effected

by the efficacious influences of divine power : Hereby the soul is created anew in Christ : It is born of the spirit, and fitted for a life of new obedience on earth ; and, in some measure, for a life of glory in Heaven. Of *him*, says our Apostle, *are ye in Christ Jesus* ; and as the renewed soul is the subject of a gracious change, he is the object of Christ's love : As the father hath loved me, so have I loved you, says Christ to his Disciples, continue *ye in my love*.

We may observe further, the manner of expression sometimes refers to that constituted and saving union which the believer bears to Christ. This is intended particularly in the words of our text. The bond of this union, on our part, is faith. Hereby the soul becomes united to Christ, and interested in the saving benefits of his mediation. We are often said to be justified by *faith in Christ* ; i. e. by that righteousness of his which faith apprehends. Out of respect to this only, God is at peace with the sinner ; forgives his sins, and makes him an heir of the heavenly inheritance. By a humble faith in Christ as the Lord our righteousness, we become united to, and interested in him to saving purpose. This is the gospel command and promise, *Believe on the Lord Jesus, and thou shalt be saved*.

Since this grace is considered as a leading mark in the character of those whose death will eventually prove a blessing, let us enquire how it is effected ; or what are some of those steps which usually lead to it ?

As a general answer, we observe, It is a fruit of the holy spirit's saving operation upon the heart of a sinner. Thus we read, Eph. ii. 8, 10. *By grace are ye saved, through faith, and that not of yourselves : it is the gift of God.* That we believe to salvation, and obtain salvation through

faith, is owing to divine assistance and grace.—
For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus, unto good works.

But tho we are fallen, yet God is pleased to deal with us as rational creatures: He draws us with the cords of a man, and with the bands of compassionate love.

1st. Hereby the soul is convinced of sin, or of its lost and ruined state as a sinner. That the way he is in, is the way to hell, leading down to the chambers of eternal death. He is thus convinced that the curse of the law lies upon him.— It seems to point him out, and say, *thou art the man*; thou art a condemned malefactor; and nothing but the abused patience of God keeps thee from endless perdition. The awakened sinner is ready to cry out with the convinced jaylor, *Sirs, what must I do to be saved?* When sin is set in order before the sinner, and he is made to know his abominations, he can't but tremble at the apprehension of his sin and danger. In this case, he hopes to restore peace to his mind, by methods of his own devising: and pacify the Deity and his own conscience by prayers and tears, penances and reformations. A self-righteous spirit was very apparent in the Pharisees and Jews in general; and is common to mankind; and perhaps, never operates with more violence, than when sinners are awakened to serious concern respecting the issue of their evil courses. But they are not prepared to accept Christ and his salvation, until they are convinced that creature-helps are no better than refuges of lies.

Again. The convinced soul is persuaded that Christ Jesus is such a saviour as he needs: That it is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance that Christ came into the world to save even the chief of sinners; and that he may with

safety trust himself in his hands. The sacrifice, which he has made of himself, is a propitiation for sin. He has died, the just for the unjust ; and now God can be just to himself, and yet justify the sinner, who believeth on Jesus. And as there is no other name under Heaven given among men, whereby they can be saved, but the name of Jesus : He desires to be found in him, not having his own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ.

The objections to the gospel salvation, which appear to sinners of great weight, are removed by the convincing influences of the holy spirit. They are brought to see themselves justly condemned by the law of God, and thus shut up to the faith of the gospel. Their hearts *feel* what their understandings *see* : and being convinced that Christ is able and ready to save all who come unto God by him, their souls go forth towards him and rest on him as the Lord their righteousness. Thus they hearken to the offers and invitations of the gospel ; receive Christ as a whole saviour ; and, by the gospel constitution, *are in him* ; become united to him, as the branches to the vine : and, with this union they become interested in all his saving benefits. *All is theirs and they are Christ's, and Christ is God's.*

But we may observe, that the faith by which the just shall live, is to be considered with its genuine fruits and effects. It is an operative grace and works by love ; it purifies the heart, and is productive of new obedience. The promises of the gospel, assure the believer of eternal blessedness, considered as having run the christian race, and thus laying hold of the prize which is set before him.

The believer indeed is an heir of the heavenly inheritance ; but is not in possession, till he has

fought the good fight, and kept the faith, and finished his course : till all old things are done away, and all things are become new : till he is attempered to the blessednes and enjoyments of that world, where all sinning and sorrowing are followed by complete holines and felicity.

Those who thus live in the Lord Jesus, being united to him by a faith which is not dead, being alone, are blessed now in the love and favor of God, and shall be more blessed when they shall enter into the joy of their Lord.

We are now to enquire, wherein does their blessedness consist ? they are pronounced blessed, *that they may rest from their labors.* tho the good man does not account it a burden to serve God, yet he may well esteem it a favor to be dismissed from the busy scenes of life, and admitted to that heavenly rest which remaineth for the faithful servants of God. He is concerned to be faithful to the death, confiding in that animating promise, *I will give thee a crown of life.* His good works shall follow him into the other world : The memory of them will be pleasant, and the reward glorious, far above their deserts.

Labor here may take in sufferings as well as actual services. Those, who die in the Lord, are freed from those many undesirable things which they meet with here. They are freed from sinning and from suffering. The first is the procuring cause of the last ; and both are cause of sorrowing.

I need not spend much time to prove that sinless perfection does not belong to the character of the best men. We are expressly told that *there is not a just man on earth, that doeth good and sinneth not.* If we say, we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. The Apostle Paul, an eminently good man, and not a whit

behind the very chiefest Apostle, found a law in his members, warring against the law of his mind, and bringing him into captivity to the law of sin ; so that he was often doing what he condemned himself for ; and neglecting to do what his judgment told him, ought to be done. He therefore cries out in the bitterness of his soul, O, wretched man that I am ! who shall deliver me from the body of this death ? And where is the man, who cannot, from his own experience, subscribe to saint Paul's confession of the evil propensity of his heart, and the many sad expressions of it in his life ? An evil heart, an en-snaring world, and a tempting devil frequently cause him to break the best resolutions ; offend against his God ; and arm his conscience against himself. What a happy change does the good man make, when he leaves this finning world, for a state of perfect holiness ! where no fretting, mischief-making passion disturbs his inward re-pose, or interrupts the exercise of grace !

Again. Glorified Saints are freed from all those natural evils which attend them in this world. We are told that *man is born to trouble as the sparks fly upwards* : And this is confirmed by experience : We see it, we feel it, every day. Even our best enjoyments seem to have a curse entailed to them. Teasing disappointments attend our outward interest. Riches take to themselves wings and fly away. Job lost his flocks and herds, and servants, in quick succession.— Many have fallen, from the summit of worldly affluence, down to the depths of poverty, in an instant. But the heavenly inheritance is sure. Treasures above are not subject to the accidents of time.

How often are we called to part with worldly friends and dear connections. Parents, with

heart-felt pain, have mourned the loss of children ; and children the loss of parents, of brethren and sisters. Husbands and wives have been called to part and bid a long adieu. And other near connections have been dissolved by the cold hand of death. Such trials can't be described ; feeling only will teach us. But in Heaven, the children of God are secured from such providences. Death never enters the walls of the new Jerusalem. O happy state, where brethren, whose hearts unite in truest, friendship, meet never to part !

Further. Glorified Saints are secure from every injury to their persons. We have learned by feeling, what bodily pain is. Holy Job was a remarkable instance of this kind of suffering.— In addition to other more trying afflictions, we find him covered with noisome and painful ulcers, which caused him to complain, in the language of distress, *I am made to possess months of vanity : wearisome nights are appointed to me.— When I lye down, I say, when shall I rise and the night be gone ? and I am full of tossing to and fro, unto the dawning of the day.* Others have had similar trials. They are chastened with pain upon their beds, and the multitude of their bones with strong pain. But, in Heaven these feelings are not known. The inhabitants of that world shall not say, *I am sick.* Everlasting vigor, cheerfulness and ease shall render every soul forever zealous and active in obedience, as the Angels are in Heaven.

Further. Glorified Saints are not in danger of suffering in their reputation. Heaven admits no whisperers, no backbiters, nor evil minded persons ; such as are, alas, too common in this world, where the tongue of slander, tho a little member, is a world of mischief : setting on fire

the course of nature, and is, itself, set on fire of hell.

Once more. Heaven puts an end to all those anxious fears and doubts which attend good men in this life. Some are, all their days, in bondage thro' fear of death and other undesirable events. They are, sometimes, in doubt, whether God is their reconciled friend ; and fear the consequences of dying. But when they are safe landed on the heavenly shore, they rejoice to find themselves admitted into the presence of God and Christ, and the blessed society of Angels and Saints. And when their bodies shall be raised, they shall be incorruptible and immortal. Death shall have no more dominion over them. They have no doubt whether their repentance was unto life, or their faith that by which the just shall live. All fears of coming short of the glory of God are at an end. But these are blessings of a negative import : Evils which do not follow good men into the other world, tho' they cleave fast to them, whilst here. We proceed to observe, 2dly. That the blessedness of glorified Saints, consists in all positive good. This will more than counterbalance the evils which the children of God may meet with, in this disciplinary state. The Apostle reckoned, *that the sufferings of the present time were not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall hereafter be revealed in christians.*

But first. One thing of great importance here, is this, that glorified Saints enjoy the most intimate communion with the great God, our father in Heaven. The holiest and wisest of men, in this imperfect state, know but little of God. The largest manifestations of his love, to their souls, are but small foretastes of that happiness which is enjoyed in his presence above.

God is the sum of good ; the fountain of perfection and blessedness : and all the good, which we possess, is derived from our heavenly father. But the high favor of these good things is much abated, by their coming to us, thro the channel of the *Creature*, and with the tincture of a curse. Oftentimes, they are thick and clouded and troubled waters. But in Heaven, God deals out to his children immediately, and in the largest measures ; as might be expected of a great and bountiful king and father, who delights to honor and happify his own favourites. This joy will be unspeakable and full of glory.

Another circumstance adding greatly to the felicity of Heaven, is this, that the redeemed of Christ shall be admitted into his immediate presence, and to the actual participation of those good things which he has procured for them.— How will they rejoice to see Christ as he is, in distinction from what he was when on earth, in the form of a servant, and even of a malefactor ; a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief ; with his visage marred more than any man's. Father, I will, says our divine Lord, that those whom thou hast given me, be with me, where I am ; that they may behold my glory which thou hast given me. “If the Queen of Sheba had reason to pronounce those happy, who were admitted to hear Solomon's wisdom, and to partake of his royal munificence, what shall we say of those who stand continually before God, and see his glory and the glory of the Lamb : and so as to be made partakers of that glory ; to feel themselves immediately interested in it.” To them Christ will give to eat of the tree of life, and of the hidden manna : Yea, he will make them pillars in the temple of God, and they shall go no more out : and he will write upon them the name of his

God ; and the name of the city of his God, which is New-Jerusalem : and he will write upon them his own new name. Yea more, if more can be, he will grant them to sit with him in his throne ; and he that sitteth on the throne, shall dwell amongst them. The Lamb, which is in the midst of the throne, shall feed them and shall lead them unto living fountains of water ; and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes. These and many other passages of sacred scripture, set forth to us, in a very instructive manner, that superior glory, which ariseth from intimate communion with the blessed God and our divine Redeemer ; to which good men are admitted, when they leave this world.

Again. Death is a blessing to the Saints, inasmuch as it introduces them into the company of the blessed above ; holy Angels and glorified Saints. Good men are now excluded, by a wall of flesh, from the society of their kindred souls ; their brethren, their best friends in glory. But ere long this shall be taken down ; and that glorified company open full to view. Oh ! how will it ravish the departing spirit, when it comes in fair view of that holy society ; Angels of light and glory ; probably, of various ranks and orders ; such as are darkly pointed out by *thrones, dominions, principalities and powers* : and also perfected spirits of good men, who went before, and with other glorious intelligences, surround the throne and testify the warmest gratitude and highest reverence, in hymns of praise and thanksgiving to him who sitteth on the throne, and to the Lamb.

If the heavenly inhabitants rejoice at the conversion of one soul, much more will they rejoice at his arrival in Heaven. They will, with purest friendship, admit him to participate in those di-

vine enjoyments, from whence results perfect felicity. How will those, who were fellow-sufferers here, rejoice to meet in Heaven, where is no sinning, nor sorrowing ! With what ravishing joy, will husbands and wives, parents and children, and other dear connections, who were once called to a mournful parting, embrace each other with the assurance that they shall never part again ! How will they entertain one another with recounting those wonderful events, which have fallen out within their notice, or in some other way, come to their knowledge !

The society of unembodied spirits is not a mere silent shew. Saints newly arrived, receive much interesting information from Angels, and from Saints who went before, respecting the perfections of God and his works of creation, of providence and of grace. Many of the mysteries, which involve these works will be unfolded by those bright intelligencies, who have been under the best advantages for knowing the operations of God, and his wise design in them. How little is known of him, by those who have studied most into his word and works ! an infinite variety of things lie wholly out of our sight. But all are made known to the glorified children of God, which will tend to give them more just, exalted and happy views of their Creator and Redeemer. When that, which *is in part*, shall be done away, then shall they see face to face, and know as they are known.

But in a word. Since the glorified Saint is holy *as* God is holy ; so he is happy, *like* him.—The enjoyments and entertainments of Heaven, which eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man conceived, will fill the holy soul with unspeakable and unceasing joy and glory ; without this last circumstance all else is as noth-

ing. It would be a kind of hell in Heaven, to think of once loosing Heaven; as it would be a kind of Heaven to the damned, had they but hopes of once escaping. O eternity! thou solemn, interesting word, which contains the perfection of glory and felicity. Well may they be called blessed, who rest from the labor, toil and pain, which fall to the lot of the best men, in this state of exercise, of trial and discipline; and are allowed to enjoy the happifying fruits of their faithful services, according to the rich grace of a merciful and faithful God and Saviour.

The application is before us. It is certain that we are made for an eternal state of existence: and shall, immediately after death, be admitted to mansions of heavenly glory and felicity; or, be consigned to dwell with everlasting burnings. Our condition after this life will not be altered. He, who is filthy, must be filthy still. He, who is unjust, must be unjust still. He, who is miserable, must be miserable still. The holy spirit does not attend departed sinners with his renewing influences; or with the offers of salvation. It is then of the highest importance, that, without delay, we become united to Christ, by a true and living faith: and greatly for our consolation, that we be well assured of the favor and friendship of God. If this could not be obtained, it must be submitted to, like other unavoidable evils. But the nature of the thing, and our bibles teach us, that it is attainable. This is implied in the discriminating characteristics of Saints and sinners, which we find clearly pointed out: and in many exhortations, to examine and prove and know ourselves.

Perhaps, the divine Being may, by immediate revelation, have assured some of his own children of their interest in his friendship. He was pleas-

ed to signify to Abraham that he approved of his faith and obedience, and admitted him to wonderful familiarity with himself, by this he might infer, that God was indeed his friend.— Moses, David, and many of the Prophets had similar tokens of the divine favor. Daniel was expressly told, by an Angel, that he was greatly beloved of God. But we have no warrant from the bible to look for this, in ordinary cases.— Our business is to search our own hearts : enquire what is their habitual and prevailing disposition, and also the tenor of our lives : and may count on former experiences, if they have been confirmed by a series of gracious exercises, sweetly and powerfully influencing to a persevering course of practical virtue and piety.

Let us then give diligence to be acquainted with ourselves ; and not rest easy, unless we can, on gospel grounds, conclude that Christ is formed within us ; and that we are *in him*, by a true, justifying faith, which worketh by love.

Again. What obligations are we under to the Father and to the Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the spirit of all grace, that we have such encouragement to hope for a blessed immortality. Observation and the bible, teach us, that the whole world lies in wickedness. It is true, not merely with now and then a case-hardened sinner, that he is destitute of the fear of God, but with the apostate race of man. The seeds of sin are in every heart, as appears by their evil fruit. Our own consciences are instead of a thousand witnesses, to convict us of a perversely sinful bias. It follows, that we are under the curse, which dooms us to endless perdition.

But the gospel brings us glad tidings of great joy ; letting us know, that God so loved the world, as to give his son to be a propitiation for

sin ; that, whosoever believeth on him, should not perish but have everlasting life. The love of Christ in making his soul an offering for sin, is without a parellel. The invaluable benefits, purchased by his sufferings and death, are offered to sinners of mankind, on the lowest terms. Nothing more is required than that they accept this great salvation, with humble hearts, and sincere resolutions to turn to the service of God. If their hearts are stout against the Lord, and thus not able, i. e. not willing to be saved in the way of the gospel ; this does not lessen the grace of God ; nor our obligations to praise him for the wonders of redeeming love. It is our reasonable service to do this, not only by speaking forth his praise, but by yielding our bodies as living sacrifices, active instruments of righteousness ; advancing his glory in the world.

The subject, which has been under consideration will naturally lead to a use of exhortation. The blessedness of those who die in the Lord, should influence the living to give all diligence to become united to Christ. Notwithstanding the perverseness of sinners, God is pleased to treat them like persons of reason ; drawing them with the cords of a man, and with the bands of compassionate love. Life and death are set before them. They are invited and urged to choose life, that they may live forever ; and to excite them to faithful diligence in the service of God. They are assured that their labor shall not be in vain in the Lord. Their good works, in their happifying fruits, shall follow them into the other world. As then we love our souls, let us be up and doing what our hands find to do with our might. Let us look to Christ, as the Lord our righteousness : thankfully accept his salvation, and with dutiful hearts submit to his govern-

ment ; forming our lives by his example and his laws. *He will reject those, who will not have him to reign over them* ; yet his faithful disciples have his promise, that they shall receive a hundred fold now in this present time ; and in the world to come, eternal life.

Let us then be exhorted to prostrate ourselves with deep humility, at the footstool of sovereign grace ; and, by faith in Christ, put in for a share in the blessings of immortality. Plead not, O sinner, your inability, for a worse plea cannot be made. It is of the moral kind ; and the higher it rises, the more inexcusable. *Ye will not come to me*, says Christ to the Jews, *that ye may have life*. If this is the great obstacle in the way of your salvation, (and what else can it be, since the gospel is in your hands ?) you may, with fearful expectation, look for that forest of punishments, which awaits you ; and from which you are kept by the abused patience of God.

But behold, now is the accepted time. Christ stands at the door of your heart, and knocks for admission. Open at his call : and, without delay, receive him and his salvation. He has graciously assured you, that he will not cast you off ; but receive you into the arms of his mercy, and make you an heir of eternal blessedness. Let the goodness and the severity of Christ operate as powerful motives, to excite you to fly for refuge to lay hold on the hope which is set before you, and to live the life of the righteous, that you may die his death, and your last end be like his.

Again. The consideration of the blessedness of those who die in the Lord, may serve to reconcile the children of God to the thoughts of dying. Death, in itself considered, is a very undesirable event. *We who are in this tabernacle, do groan*, says our Apostle, *being burdened many*

times with the grievous calamities of life ; but oftener, with the body of sin, which even good men, carry about with them ; *not that we would be unclothed*, as he adds ; *but clothed upon with our house, which is from Heaven*. But, considering death as the passage to glory, the believer may be willing to die, *and be absent from the body, that he may be present with the Lord* ; which, to him, will be far better than a long continuance here. When he shall put off the rags of mortality, he expects to put on the robes of glory. He will not find himself naked, but clothed with garments of praise. At what time, therefore, the gracious soul, is in the lively exercise of that faith, which is the substance of things hoped for, and the evidence of things not seen, his heart is disengaged from the enjoyments and amusements of sense : They are, to him, like the small dust of the balance. With high satisfaction, can he think of exchanging the shadow for the substance : the airy pleasures of a moment, for the substantial joys of eternity ; and, in the firm hope of a resurrection to incorruption and immortality, he can say, in the language of inspiration. O death where is thy sting ? O grave, where is thy victory ?

Once more. The subject will afford great consolation to the children of God, when called to part with their friends, as they trust in the Lord. Weep not for me, said Christ, to the daughters of Jerusalem. Could they have seen the *joy unspeakable and full of glory*, which awaited him ; it would have served to dry up their tears ; if they were indeed his friends.

If by faith and hope we can look into heaven, and see our departed friends in those mansions of glory, which their divine Lord had prepared for them, could we weep on their account ? If ye,

loved me, said Christ to his Disciples, ye would rejoice, because I said, I go unto my father.

It is our duty to weep and mourn, when our heavenly father is pleased to correct us. We ought to humble ourselves under his mighty hand; and for our instruction and improvement, hearken to the lessons which he is giving us. But good reason to believe that our departed friends are safely arrived at that city of our God above, and are drinking full draughts of heart-felt and never failing pleasure, at that river of God, which flows at his right hand, will prevent our weeping for *them*; tho we may weep for ourselves and others, who are still in a state of discipline.

The thoughts which have been suggested, may lead our meditations, with immediate respect to the mournful providence, which has called us together. Mournful as it respects us, rather than him, whose obsequies we are now attending: For we mourn, not as those who have no hope; but have the consolation of a well-grounded belief, that our departed friend has joined the society of Holy Angels and perfected Spirits of just men.

Many, of this assembly, have been well acquainted with that venerable servant of God, whose corruptible remains are soon to be deposited in the solitary mansion of the dead. It would therefore be needless, for the purpose of informing their minds, to give any traits of his character. Yet it may be useful to the living, to be reminded of those things, in the lives of good men, which may tend to excite in them a laudable emulation to glory their heavenly father: whilst their faulty imperfections (for those are to be found in the best christians) should be improved for our warning.

Funeral eulogiums are, sometimes, no better

than fulsome flatteries, which injure the character of the deceased, and offend the modest ear. The preacher is not apprehensive that he shall thus offend, whilst he suggests a few things for the information of some, now present.

That venerable man whose remains are before us, was a native of Southbury, in this State; and descended from parents, respectable on many accounts; and especially, for their exemplary piety. This son was trained up to be useful to mankind, in some *manual* profession. His heart was, hopefully, seasoned with divine grace, in early life. This might tend to beget in him an earnest desire to serve God in the gospel of his son. That he might lay a further foundation for usefulness in the sacred calling, he went thro a course of collegiate studies. Soon after, with the advantage of mature age and solid judgment, in addition to the higher accomplishment of true piety (as a long course of succeeding years served to evince) he was introduced into the ministry, as a preacher of the gospel.

An ecclesiastical society having been newly formed in this place, he was applied to, as a candidate for the gospel ministry; and after sufficient trial, this church and people, with great harmony, invited him to take the pastoral charge of them. This call he accepted; and was vested with the sacerdotal office, by the solemn rite of ordination, on the 9th day of Oct. A. D. 1745.

The God of nature and of grace was pleased to furnish him with many valuable gifts, for the gospel ministry. He acquired a good degree of useful information; especially in the sacred scriptures; and was a scribe well instructed unto the kingdom of heaven; a workman, who needed not to be ashamed; rightly dividing the word of truth. He never affected a flowery stile; but

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It is our duty to weep and mourn, when our heavenly father is pleased to correct us. We ought to humble ourselves under his mighty hand; and for our instruction and improvement, hearken to the lessons which he is giving us. But good reason to believe that our departed friends are safely arrived at that city of our God above, and are drinking full draughts of heart-felt and never failing pleasure, at that river of God, which flows at his right hand, will prevent our weeping for *them*; tho we may weep for ourselves and others, who are still in a state of discipline.

The thoughts which have been suggested, may lead our meditations, with immediate respect to the mournful providence, which has called us together. Mournful as it respects us, rather than him, whose obsequies we are now attending: For we mourn, not as those who have no hope; but have the consolation of a well-grounded belief, that our departed friend has joined the society of Holy Angels and perfected Spirits of just men.

Many, of this assembly, have been well acquainted with that venerable servant of God, whose corruptible remains are soon to be deposited in the solitary mansion of the dead. It would therefore be needless, for the purpose of informing their minds, to give any traits of his character. Yet it may be useful to the living, to be reminded of those things, in the lives of good men, which may tend to excite in them a laudable emulation to glory their heavenly father: whilst their faulty imperfections (for those are to be found in the best christians) should be improved for our warning.

Funeral eulogiums are, sometimes, no better

than fulsome flatteries, which injure the character of the deceased, and offend the modest ear. The preacher is not apprehensive that he shall thus offend, whilst he suggests a few things for the information of some, now present.

That venerable man whose remains are before us, was a native of Southbury, in this State; and descended from parents, respectable on many accounts; and especially, for their exemplary piety. This son was trained up to be useful to mankind, in some *manual* profession. His heart was, hopefully, seasoned with divine grace, in early life. This might tend to beget in him an earnest desire to serve God in the gospel of his son. That he might lay a further foundation for usefulness in the sacred calling, he went thro a course of collegiate studies. Soon after, with the advantage of mature age and solid judgment, in addition to the higher accomplishment of true piety (as a long course of succeeding years served to evince) he was introduced into the ministry, as a preacher of the gospel.

An ecclesiastical society having been newly formed in this place, he was applied to, as a candidate for the gospel ministry; and after sufficient trial, this church and people, with great harmony, invited him to take the pastoral charge of them. This call he accepted; and was vested with the sacerdotal office, by the solemn rite of ordination, on the 9th day of Oct. A. D. 1745.

The God of nature and of grace was pleased to furnish him with many valuable gifts, for the gospel ministry. He acquired a good degree of useful information; especially in the sacred scriptures; and was a scribe well instructed unto the kingdom of heaven; a workman, who needed not to be ashamed; rightly dividing the word of truth. He never affected a flowery stile; but

used decent and expressive language, suited to the solemnity of theological subjects. He appeared to feel the truths he delivered to others ; and expressed them with a pathos and energy, naturally flowing from a heart warmed with a sense of divine things. He might, with propriety, be surnamed a Boanerges. The word of God, delivered by him, seemed to proceed from the heart ; and, often, reach the heart. The holy spirit improved him as an instrument of turning many from darkness to light, and from the power of sin to God. He had, from time to time, the exalted satisfaction of finding the pleasure of God, *eminently* prospering in his hands.

He was a man of acute penetration and solid judgment ; and, like a wise master builder, conducted the affairs of God's house with great prudence. He well knew how to guard the flock of Christ from the ravages of insidious wolves : and, under his wise and faithful administrations, much of the beauty and order of a gospel church, has always been visible here.

His usefulness was not confined to this society. Ministers, as well as private christians, very often sought to him for advice, and were convinced of the wisdom, with which it was dictated.—Perhaps no one, within the circle of our acquaintance, has been more successful in quieting disturbances which have arisen in sister churches, than this servant of God.

We have great reason to rejoice in the goodness of him, who is the source of being and perfection, that he was pleased to raise up and qualify this venerable man for such eminent usefulness in the vineyard of Christ : That he has lengthened out his life to a good old age ; and continued him in the ministry for more than half a century,

But tis appointed to men once to die. The fathers, where are they ? and the prophets, do they live forever ? For more than two years has Mr. Strong been visited with very distressing disorders. Wearisome days and nights were appointed to him. That God, whose way is in the sea, and whose footsteps are not known, has been pleased to chasten him with pain, and the multitude of his bones with strong pain. That his life has been continued to this time is beyond expectation. For months past, he and all who were witnesses of his distress, have supposed the time of his departure was at hand. The maker of his frame was pleased to form him with a firm constitution. This might tend to give strength to his disorder, whilst it enabled him to bear up under it. Excepting a few short interruptions, he had the free exercise of his rational powers : and always appeared to enjoy a comforting serenity of mind in the prospect of futurity. With that diffidence which becomes the christian, he repeatedly said to me, that he thought he could with humble confidence, leave himself with a gracious, merciful and faithful God, trusting in the merits and mediation of an all-sufficient Saviour ; thro whom alone, he looked for the blessings of immortality ; and hoped for the rewards of mercy. The gospel doctrines of grace, which were the darling subjects of his preaching, yielded great support and consolation in the near view of death.

We have good reason to believe, that he is the subject of that blessedness, which the Holy Spirit, with an audible voice, declared, *to belong to the dead, who die in the Lord.* This will afford high consolation to his numerous surviving friends, and particularly to his children.

Decency requires that a word of address be now made to them.

Dear and respectable Friends,

Your heavenly Father is treating you as children, inasmuch as you are no strangers to affliction : For he has told us, that, *whom he loveth, chasteneth and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth.* But, as he corrects you in love, so it is in measure. The cup of affliction, which has repeatedly been put into your hands, has been tempered with many consoling ingredients. You are now called to part with the *last* of your earthly parents ; but under circumstances, far from being aggravated. But few parents have been greater blessings to their offspring, than yours. They watched over your childhood and youth, with the tenderest care ; supplying your wants, in the most dependant stage of life. By instruction, counsel, example and prayer, they were solicitous to bring you up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. Whilst you retain a grateful remembrance of the many kind offices performed by your immediate parents, you will not be unmindful of the obligations you are under to your heavenly father, who improved them to convey to you those invaluable blessings, which you received thro their hands. You will be sensible of the kindness of heaven in continuing them for a long period ; and making them, in a variety of ways, blessings thro life : and also in giving you an opportunity to make some requital in kind.

By their past wise counsels and good examples they will continue to administer instruction ; and wherein they followed Christ, you will feel sweetly constrained to follow them. Altho you can't mourn for them, yet you will mourn for yourselves and your children—and evidence to

your observers a sense of God's right to govern and dispose of you and yours, as pleaseth him.

You can't fail of that satisfaction which will arise from the undissimbed condolance of your numerous friends ; and their devout wishes, that you may have those divine consolations which are not few nor small ; and that the dispensations of providence, may promote your spiritual good here, and highest felicity in a better world.

It will be expected that a brief address be made to the church and people of God in this place.

Men and Bretbren,

The head of the church was pleased to approve of your becoming zeal for the worship and order of his house, in the day of your small things ; and to provide for you a Pastor, (as we trust) after his own heart. You soon derived great advantages from his eminent prudence. He was always concerned, to promote your best interest, which lay near his heart. When in danger of being led astray by men, whose zeal was beyond their knowledge, you have been kept in order and harmony, by his prudent counsels and cautions. You have found him a faithful watchman and skilful guide, as well as a true christian preacher, and instructive teacher of morality.— You are witnesses, that in the course of a long ministry, he has made Christ and the way of salvation by him, made known in the gospel, the darling subjects of his preaching : feeding the lambs and the sheep of his flock, with the wholesome food of sound doctrine, as they were able to bear it.

And as he was a faithful, so he was a success- Minister of the New-Testament. His sermons were delivered from a strong and faithful memo-

ry; and often, with that affection, which had a happy tendency, by God's blessing, to enkindle a like flame in the hearts of his hearers. His preaching was plain and practical; scriptural and powerful: and by the efficacious influence of divine grace was effectual to awaken carelessness, and direct enquiring souls in the way to Zion; and to lead the children of God in the road to heaven.

His lips are now sealed in silence. You will hear his voice no more. Yet by wisely recollecting and faithfully improving the counsels which he has given, you may hear him, tho' dead, yet speaking.

We rejoice with you, that altho' your late venerable Pastor has, for some time, been laid aside by sickness, and now by death, yet you are not as sheep without a shepherd. You have been led to the choice of one for your spiritual guide, who is now your minister in the gospel. We trust that you will esteem and love him highly for his work-sake; and do, what in you lies, to make his life comfortable, and his ministry successful amongst you.

We commend him and you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified.

With propriety, a few words may be addressed to my brethren in the sacred ministry.

Reverend Sirs,

A mournful, but long expected occasion has called us together. The great disposer of events has taken from our head, this day, a father in the ministry. Some of us have been long and intimately acquainted with him; and have seen much reason to esteem and respect him highly,

for those eminent gifts and graces, which appeared in him. Altho' these could not secure him from the stroke of death, by which he is removed from our world ; yet, we may still profit by his past wise counsels and exemplary conversation.

By this providence we are reminded of our own mortality. The treasure of the gospel is committed to earthen vessels, which may, at any time fall and break to pieces. This should excite us to rise to vigorous exertions ; in the work of him, who sent us into the world : for the night is at hand, in which no work can be done. God has honored us, by committing to us a dispensation of the gospel. But who is sufficient for these things ? Yet we are allowed and encouraged to look for that grace, which is sufficient. We are stewards of these heavenly mysteries ; but may not be *always* stewards. A reckoning time will come ; nor can it be very remote. The care of precious souls is committed to us ; and should they perish, thro' our neglect, we are warned that their blood shall be required at our hands.

Let us not shun to declare any part of the counsel of God : but, with those important considerations, contained in the law and gospel, endeavor to persuade sinners to be reconciled to God.— Let us watch for the flock ; evidence truth to the consciences of men ; labor to awaken sinners ; and hold up Christ as the way and the truth and the life. Let us reprove some with gentleness ; and others with sharpness : make it our care to pour balm into wounded spirits ; and to speak a word in season to the wearied ; and manage all with a deep sense of the worth of souls ; and the invaluable price which was paid for their redemption ; together with the solemn

account, which, ere long, we must give to the chief shepherd.

Let all, whether ministers or people, bear this on our minds, that we are probationers for eternity. And, altho we are not to look for heaven, as the reward of our service ; but shall have the highest reason to say, we are unprofitable servants, should we even do all that is required of us ; yet this is our working season, and we are told, that, whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he, who soweth to his flesh, shall of the flesh, reap corruption : but he, who soweth to the spirit, shall, of the spirit, reap life everlasting.

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